



BIBLEWAY MINISTRIES

MAKING A DIFFERENCE—THE BIBLE WAY



Responding with Gratitude

My wife is a giver. Some people enjoy doing things for others — that's my wife! Giving is a part of who she is. She enjoys it. Sometimes she will pick up an item for a neighbor while out shopping or help a neighbor in some other way. Although she renders these acts of kindness selflessly, many recipients have graciously responded with an equal act of kindness. Most of us feel good about repaying kindness to show our gratitude.

The ultimate expression of God's kindness is embodied in one verse. John 3:16 uses only 24 powerful words, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."* (NIV)

How can we ever repay God for such kindness?

I'm glad you asked (of course, you knew I was going to tell you anyway)! In Romans 12:1, Paul urges us to consider God's immense mercy and respond as living sacrifices. As we approach the New Year, let's reflect on what this means. It goes beyond mere words or temporary resolutions. Paul intentionally used the words "sacrifice," "holy" and "spiritual worship" to describe our response. Let's take a closer look.

SACRIFICE

This calls for the dedication of our entire selves — our thoughts, actions, desires and bodies — to God. It can only be meaningful when it becomes a daily commitment to live in a way that pleases Him. It is worship that is not limited to church services or specific acts of devotion; it's a lifestyle that honors God in everything we do.

HOLY

Holiness isn't about perfection but about setting ourselves apart for God's purposes. It means striving to live in accordance with His will, even when it's challenging. Our sacrifices, when offered with a sincere heart, are pleasing to God. They reflect our gratitude for His grace and our willingness to serve Him.

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP

Spiritual worship involves offering more than just our praise. Like sacrifice, it encompasses our entire being. It's about making conscious decisions that reflect God's love and righteousness. Whether it's in how we treat others, manage our time or use our talents, our lives become a testament to His glory.

As you start the New Year, let your resolve be motivated by the grace and mercy of our Lord. Consider habits or behaviors that need to change and look for opportunities to serve others so you will reflect God's love. It's the least we can do to repay His goodness with gratitude.

- Dr. L.W. Edwards

New Year's Forecast: 100% Chance of God's Faithfulness

The first Noel the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields
where they lay;
In fields where they lay – RIP!

The unthinkable had happened at my final concert of the year. As I turned the page of sheet music in the middle of my performance, the top two punched holes in the paper tore, leaving only the bottom third of the page secured in my three-ring binder. The page followed the momentum of my right-to-left turning motion, then folded forward, obscuring the music.

This is every musician's worst nightmare.

I made a quick move to steady the paper with my left hand while my right hand played the melody. Thankfully, I recovered and played to the end of the song with both hands. (And in case you were wondering, the poor shepherds survived verse 1, and all were present and accounted for in verse 2.)

THE UNPREDICTABILITY OF CONCERTS

Over the past 11 years since [Keys to Inspire](#) started, I've learned concerts can be unpredictable. Each piano has a different feel and sound. Some are electronic, while others are true percussion instruments with hammers and strings. Besides differences in the instrument from one concert venue to another, variables such as the size of the room and the position of the piano relative to the audience affect the sound quality. As I experienced, even minor details such as the way a page turns can make a difference. When I perform, I can control the notes I play, the music's tempo and volume. But I can't control everything. In fact, many concert dynamics are beyond my control. Unexpected things sometimes happen.

THE UNPREDICTABILITY OF NEW YEARS

Like a concert, each New Year brings its own unpredictability. Let's face it: We can't control the weather, the timing of natural disasters, the flow of traffic, food and gas prices, elected officials, our job security, other people and a host of other things. Because life is unpredictable, unexpected things will happen.

So how do we prepare for what we cannot predict?

PREPARING FOR THE UNPREDICTABLE

We can learn a valuable lesson from Israel's encounter with the unpredictable in Exodus 14. After his people had enslaved the nation of Israel for 400 years, Pharaoh (the king of Egypt) finally allowed Israel to leave Egypt. Then he changed his mind — and came after Israel with the full force of his army and 600 chariots.

Israel didn't expect to see an approaching dust cloud from Pharaoh's chariots behind them. Caught off guard by their unexpected circumstances, fear and anxiety seized their hearts. The Red Sea lay in front of them, so they couldn't go forward. They couldn't turn back. They couldn't escape. Capture — or worse — seemed inevitable. They faced an unexpected crisis with an unpredictable outcome.

Then Moses, Israel's leader, spoke up: *"Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."* (Exodus 14:13–14)

If you've seen *The Ten Commandments*, you know what happened next: Charlton Heston (that is, Moses) stretched out his hand over the Red Sea and it parted so Israel could walk across on dry ground. Israel crossed over, and the walls of water fell on the Egyptians. God was steady in the middle of Israel's confusion and uncertainty. He was strong where they were weak. He was in control. He was faithful.

FORECASTING YOUR FUTURE

Here's the point: Your future is unpredictable, but God's faithfulness is 100% certain. Remember this when your back is up against a wall and you can't take the nearest exit; when a setback puts your future on hold; when it looks like God has led you to a dead end; when you don't know what to do or where to go from here; when the unexpected happens. — The same God who delivered Israel is ready to show His faithfulness in your life this year. Trust me, you can trust Him. - *Cam Edwards*

